

US accuses Syria of hiding some chemical weapons

The Obama administration says Syria may still be hiding chemical weapons that could fall into the hands of the ISIL terrorist group.

US Ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power told reporters on Thursday that there were "discrepancies and omissions" in Syria's declaration that it has removed its chemical arsenal.

"We must ensure that the Syrian government destroys its remaining facilities for producing chemical weapons within the mandated time frames and without the repeated delays by the Assad regime [sic] that plagued earlier removal efforts," USA Today quoted Power as saying on Thursday.

Power, who is president of the UN Security Council for September, also said that the undeclared chemical weapons could be seized by ISIL terrorists, who were initially trained by the CIA in Jordan in 2012 to destabilize the government of President Bashar al-Assad.

The group controls large parts of Syria's northern territory. ISIL sent its fighters into neighboring Iraq in June, quickly seizing large swaths of land straddling the border between the two countries.

"Certainly if there are chemical weapons left in Syria, there will be a risk that those weapons fall into [ISIL's] hands. And we can only imagine what a group like that would do if in possession of such a weapon," Power added.

Russia and the United States agreed a year ago on a deal under which Syria would have its chemical weapons eliminated and the US would in return not carry out planned strikes on the Arab country.

In June, Syria handed over the last of its chemical weapons stockpile to a joint mission led by the UN and Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which is overseeing the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons.

In response, the United States called the removal of the remaining 100 tons of toxic material an "important milestone."

On Thursday, Sigrid Kaag, the head of the joint UN and OPCW mission, said 100 percent of the worst declared toxins had been destroyed, while 96 percent of the overall chemical weapons arsenal had been eliminated.

Syria has been gripped by deadly unrest since 2011. According to reports, the United States and its regional allies - especially Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey - are supporting the militants operating inside the country.

According to the United Nations, more than 130,000 people have been killed and millions displaced due to the turmoil that has gripped Syria for over two years.